

10.11.2007 - Rockefeller, Rahall Announce Wyoming County Selected As GroundworkUSA Pilot Community

Senator Jay Rockefeller and Rep. Nick Rahall, both D-W.Va., announced today that Wyoming County has been named a Groundwork USA Pilot Community - a designation that will allow the county to explore economic and environmental opportunities, and the possibility of becoming a Groundwork Trust.

Groundwork USA is a network of independent, non-profit businesses -- or Groundwork Trusts -- that seek sustained regeneration, improvement, and management of the physical environment through community-based partnerships. Both Rockefeller and Rahall have been strongly advocating for Wyoming County, which was one of only four communities nationwide under consideration this year for the establishment of a Groundwork Trust, to be chosen for this opportunity.

"I am pleased Groundwork USA has chosen to honor the residents of Wyoming County for their hard work," Rahall said. "This program will help show the nation that Southern West Virginia is one of the most promising places to live in our country."

To carry out the goals of the project, a Wyoming County Groundwork Trust Steering Committee made up of a diverse group of county and community representatives, including the Rural Appalachian Improvement League (RAIL), has been formed. With this new designation, the Committee will receive pilot funding from Groundwork USA in the amount of \$15,000, as well as technical assistance, to complete a feasibility study and strategic plan to outline how a Groundwork Trust would be established in the community.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for RAIL and the people of Wyoming County to showcase everything this area has to offer, and to create more economic and job opportunities," Rockefeller said. "Given its natural beauty, local talent and a tremendous commitment from the community, I know the opportunities that exist in Southern West Virginia. As a Pilot Community, Wyoming County will now be able to explore even more possibilities to make it an exciting place to visit - and an even better place to call home."

Potential projects for Wyoming County include:

- Developing interpretive trails, river access points, aquaculture opportunities, and fish and boat docks along the Upper Guyandotte River;
- Forming a Community Sustainable Agriculture (CSA) to organize farmers markets, provide traditional food preparation and preservation educational opportunities, organize nutrition classes, and to provide fresh, organic fruits and vegetables to the local population;
- Creating a hiking a biking network of trails that would link Twin Falls and the municipalities to one another;
- Establishing artisan communities and artisan trails, emphasizing Appalachian culture and heritage and its adaptations to contemporary influences;
- Empowering youth through Groundwork Green Team projects;
- Preserving the Luther Elkins Petroglyph site; and,
- Rehabilitating the old Wyco Church

Groundwork USA Trust is a partnership program of the National Park Service (NPS) Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields Program. Peggy Pings, Outdoor Recreation Planner with NPS-RTCA based in Morgantown, W.Va., will be providing technical assistance and staff time to the Wyoming County project.

"The Groundwork USA's trusts are excellent examples of how communities and government agencies can partner to promote economic and environmental revitalization," said Rahall. "The formation of a Groundwork Trust in Wyoming County would greatly help Southern West Virginia's efforts to transform distressed areas into recreational, environmental, and economic opportunities," said Rahall.